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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIRUT 002427

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TAGS: [MOPS](#) [EAID](#) [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [LE](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: TFLE01: UNSYG PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE URGES
ACTION ON HUMANITARIAN CORRIDORS

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Classified By: Ambassador Jeffrey D. Feltman for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

1. (C/NF) In a 7/19 meeting, the Personal Representative of the UN Secretary-General (PRSG), Geir Pedersen, told the Ambassador there is an urgent need to establish humanitarian corridors to southern Lebanon in order to address an "increasing humanitarian disaster" there. Among these routes would have to be one connecting Lebanon to the outside world. Pedersen suggested that a sea route would be superior to a land route running through Syria. Securing permission for humanitarian supply ships to cross Israel's blockade of the Lebanese coast would be the primary (if not sole) challenge. Pedersen and his senior political affairs officer recommended that the USG persuade the UN Secretariat to reorganize the way in which senior UN management in Beirut coordinates emergency humanitarian response. The system in its present form, with the top UNDP official in Lebanon taking the lead, was a "disaster" in itself, they said. Pedersen subsequently told us that he hoped the USG would support his idea for a senior humanitarian coordinator to report directly to him, bypassing UNDP. (Comment: We agree. End comment.) End summary.

INCREASING HUMANITARIAN DISASTER IN SOUTH

2. (C/NF) Called on by the Ambassador on July 19, Pedersen said there was an "increasing humanitarian disaster" in southern Lebanon as fighting between the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) and Hizballah continued. Villages were cut off from food and medicine. There was an urgent need to establish humanitarian corridors in response. At the very least, Pedersen said, there was a need for:

- a north-south route;
- a route connecting the city of Tyre to the rest of southern Lebanon; and
- a route connecting Lebanon to the outside world, presumably via Syria.

BETTER TO BYPASS SYRIA IF POSSIBLE

13. (C/NF) Pedersen said he was recommending a route to Syria with some reluctance. (Comment: It would appear to reward the SARG even as the SARG continued to strongly support Hizballah while failing to contain its glee at the prospects of Prime Minister Siniora's government collapsing and the UN inquiry into the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri getting sidetracked. End comment.) He suggested that a more preferable humanitarian corridor to the outside world would be by sea, possibly by way of Cyprus.

IDEAS FOR A SEA CORRIDOR

14. (C/NF) The problem with a sea corridor, Pedersen said, would be the need to secure Israeli permission for ships using it to cross its ongoing, total blockade of the Lebanese coast. How could the Israelis be assured that there were no weapons on board any of the ships? There were several possibilities for inspection, he said, at:

- the point of origin;
- a maritime "hub," possibly Cyprus;
- the point where ships crossed the blockade; and
- a port of entry in Lebanon.

15. (C/NF) Pedersen asked if the USG could provide inspectors for a notional maritime "hub" in Cyprus. The Ambassador explained that this kind of operation would not be something for which a U.S. Embassy could provide personnel. Another alternative -- one oriented toward inspection at the port of

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entry -- would be for a detachment of UNIFIL to conduct inspections. Finally, the Israeli navy could simply inspect the ships at the 50-mile limit from the Lebanese coast.

LET GOL TAKE THE LEAD

16. (C/NF) Regardless of how exactly international assistance is conveyed to Lebanon, Shaikh recommended that the Lebanese government take the lead in coordinating the internal humanitarian relief effort to the greatest extent possible. This would be one way to help build the capacity of state institutions to eventually assert state authority over southern Lebanon in a post-conflict phase, he suggested.

UN MANAGEMENT ON THE GROUND: ANOTHER "DISASTER"

17. (C/NF) Currently, the UN Development Program (UNDP) Permanent Representative, Dr. Mona Hammam, has the lead within the UN for emergency humanitarian response in Lebanon. Pedersen and his senior political affairs officer, Salman Shaikh, described Hammam's performance to date as a "disaster." Her latest decision had been to deny clearance for representatives of the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Relief (OCHA) to enter Lebanon.

18. (C/NF) According to Pedersen and Shaikh, Hammam insisted on controlling all humanitarian activities, but lacked the necessary competence to manage them. Pedersen suggested that U.S. officials might use their contacts with the UN Secretariat, possibly Deputy Secretary-General Mark Malloch

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Brown, to have Hammam removed. This would be a prerequisite to the establishment of any effective international humanitarian relief effort, they suggested.

¶9. (C/NF) Subsequently, Pedersen called to say that he was proposing to UN headquarters that a senior UN humanitarian coordinator to assigned to Pedersen's unit. This person would coordinate all UN agencies as well as work with other donors, bypassing UNDP altogether. Pedersen expressed hope that we would support his idea. (Comment: Locally, we certainly do. Pedersen is easy to work with, always accessible, and generally attuned to global political realities. Cooperation with Hammam has proven extremely difficult in other areas, such as promotion of electoral reform. She has a deadly combination of being a micro-manager and unorganized, all with an "attitude" about the United States. End comment.)

COMMENT

¶10. (C/NF) The internal humanitarian corridors are the most urgent. For now, there are sufficient quantities of most -- but not all -- food and medical supplies inside Lebanon. But there are areas of dire need, particularly in the south, and matching supplies with needs should, in our view, be our first humanitarian priority. We know that the Israelis will be suspicious of any humanitarian convoys to the south, for fear that Hizballah could use the convoys to smuggle weapons or fighters. Truck convoys have been hit in recent days, presumably because the IDF believed they were carrying weapons for Hizballah. Any truck convoys in the South would be particularly at risk. We hope that the USG can work with the Israelis to determine how this problem can be overcome -- UN or ICRC escorts? -- on an urgent basis.

FELTMAN